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Review of the doctoral dissertation entitled: *Memories of World War II and Ethnic Identity as Reflected in the Autobiographical Narrative Interviews of Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians.*

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The subject of the dissertation is an interesting and little-explored topic in Poland. One could even say that it is an exotic topic in Polish social sciences. At the same time, it concerns the subject of the Second World War, which is eagerly studied by social science scholars in Poland. The first value of this work, then, is elaboration of the subject itself by the Polish PhD student. I would like to stress at this point that the work, written in English, i.e. in the lingua franca of the modern world, would nevertheless deserve to be translated and published in Polish, in order to bring this little-known chapter of the human fate of war closer to the Polish reader.

Right at the beginning of the dissertation, its author shares with the reader the source of her motivations for taking up this topic. They are purely biographical, although it is not about a direct biographical connection to the events and people described, but about a strongly internally lived experience of fascination with a previously unknown part of war history. Interestingly, this fascination was stimulated not so much by communicative memory - the memory of the witness - but by cultural memory - the film creating, according to cultural memory, a collective image of the past recorded in cultural texts. This fascination led the author to another continent in order to collect research material and, above all, to get to know the subjects of the events - the Japanese and their war experience. Apart from anything else, I think the case of the author demonstrates the power of the transmission of cultural memory.

Before I go on to review the work, I must point out that I am in a slightly not comfortable position because the author very often refers to my work, one in particular. I can say in this context that I am personally pleased that my work has served as a source of inspiration for a younger colleague. By the way, it was also a dissertation, and I also experienced the fascination of the issue under study and the discovery context. Reading the dissertation was therefore a

great pleasure for me and some form of return to past experiences and research topics. On the other hand, this personal attitude of mine does not affect the evaluation of the dissertation.

My opinion of the dissertation is very positive. It is well composed and well thought out. Maria Wacławik introduces original solutions regarding the way of analysing and presenting the material. The theoretical and methodological axis of the work is the reference to the relationship between memory and identity. The author rightly chooses to use an autobiographical narrative interview to set in motion both the work of memory and the work of identity. Another good methodological and analytical strategy is the use of a comparative perspective by juxtaposing the fate of the American and Canadian Japanese, who, especially from the perspective of an outside observer, were subjected to similar repressions; however, by focusing the description, the author indicates significant differences here.

In Chapter I we find an in-depth theoretical reflection on memory and identity. The author skillfully selects a very extensive literature on the subject. In addition, she moves quite freely between philosophical, psychological and sociological concepts. The author then presents the history of the Japanese diaspora in the USA and Canada and the wartime fate of both communities related to forced displacement and isolation in camps caused by Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour and the USA's entry into the war. After this comprehensive description, showing the historical context, the author goes on to characterise the method and the material, which consists of autobiographical narrative interviews conducted in Canada and the USA. The author conducted the interviews in 2016 and, as she states, some of the narrators are no longer alive. Therefore, her project also has an intervention character that fits, outside the sociological context, into the frame of oral history. The author only mentions this aspect whereas it seems to me that this thread could be better highlighted. The material collected really also has the value of witness testimony.

Chapters five, six and seven are devoted to the presentation of the material analysis. In chapter five, the author characterises the specific features of the collected narratives. A twofold comparative perspective emerges here: firstly, between Canadian and American narratives (which is what I will briefly call them) and between narratives of war experiences originating from a different historical and social context.

In Chapter 6, the author presents the wartime experiences of the Japanese through the lens of the impact of these experiences on the process of (re)construction of identity. Here the author employs an interesting triadic perspective on the past, present and future. The reflections on the

future are particularly interesting and their value can be recapitulated in the decades to come, when this future becomes the present.

Chapter 7 presents several case studies through which the author demonstrates different strategies for coping with the experience of uprooting and incarceration. My attention was particularly drawn to the author's proposal of postponed trajectory. It is an interesting and inspiring analytical idea worthy of an authorial article to show it to a wider audience of researchers.

Chapter 8 is a combination of research and theoretical perspectives. The author demonstrates the value of personal cultural memory activated during storytelling. Photographs and other artefacts have the power to activate memory and not only support it, but also allow the listener to communicate what is sometimes difficult to tell. This is where I missed some references to literature. The role of photography in stimulating memory or inspiring memory is one of the methods used especially in oral history, but not only. One could cite Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, or the classic volume *Oral History and Photography*.

It is important to emphasise that each chapter ends with a conclusion summarising the considerations presented in the chapter and highlighting the key theses. Throughout the course of the analysis, the author sticks consistently to the intended comparative framework between the American and Canadian experience. To be repeated, this is very valuable especially from the perspective of an outside observer, e.g. a European, who may miss some of the contextual differences.

In principle, this is where I could conclude the review by emphasising its main contributions: 1/ the originality of the subject matter, especially in the Polish or European context, and thus enriching the reflection on the experience of the Second World War; 2/ the author's noticeable passion, already announced at the beginning of the dissertation, but evident throughout. Its effect is a clearly noticeable authenticity of interest and maturity of approach to the topic. The author has been interested in the subject for a long time, so the reflections presented in the dissertation developed long and systematically, which translates into the quality of the work; 3/ Application of a comparative perspective showing not only the similarities and differences of the experiences as such, but also their social, cultural and historical context; 4/ significance of the research in the context of preserving the memory of the witness; 5/ interesting authorial ideas such as the aforementioned postponed trajectory, the author's interpretation of the

experience of uprooting, the prominence in the narrative of the discourse of redress. What is especially interesting in Polish discourse the word reparations is commonly use in this context.

However, the review should also contain a polemical part or stimulate the reflection, which can be discussed during the thesis defence. Let me therefore point out a few issues. The author declares that she will use the autoethnographic perspective in her work and, as I understood it, by this she means the presentation of her own motivations and biographical experiences that inspired her to undertake the research. As I have already mentioned I very much appreciate this aspect of the work, I believe that, especially in the field of biographical research, showing the researcher's own biographical experiences leading up to the problem under investigation is, or can be, an important part of the methodological description. Nevertheless I am not sure that the auto-ethnographic approach, which is somehow so fashionable, addresses these very issues. The two field notes included in the work would bring it closer, but firstly they are only two and secondly they are not analysed by the author, her experiences do not constitute research material as such, and this seems to be what autoethnography is about today. It appears to me, therefore, that the notion of autoethnography is used here in an exaggerated and basically unnecessary way.

My next comment is directed towards the subsection “Ethical Issues Related to Biographical Method”. It is difficult to argue with what is written in it. However, I perceived this section as a kind of contribution, a “political correctness” of writing about ethical issues, because now it is expected. Meanwhile, ethical issues are, in my opinion, always important in the context of a specific research work and not a theoretical consideration of their validity. Therefore, it would be much more important for the author to write about the ethical dilemmas she encountered during her work and there is no authorial reflection at all on the ethical issues that arose during the course of her own research e.g. when she listened to her narrators’ stories. This perspective would have been more interesting and fruitful.

Following contemporary trends, I also did not find in the dissertation information on how the collected narrative interviews will be archived. As the author points out, they are a valuable record of biographical memory and I am convinced that they are an important testimony that should be protected.

Another issue, which is primarily a topic for discussion, is the use of the term concentration camps by the narrators and, following them, by the author. Although the author points out that the narrators themselves relativised their own experiences by commenting that they were not

comparable to the European experience of war, yet the term seems to be rooted in the language of the narrators' memories. Without diminishing the weight of their experiences of trauma, however, I wonder to what extent language can be 'universalised' if we know the specific historical contexts and their consequences. I think that this issue would deserve some comment of the author. That dilemma, by the way, accompanied me when I analysed the written memoirs of Germans expelled from today's western areas of Poland. Their manner of narration was deceptively reminiscent of the stories of Holocaust survivors.

Another thought-provoking point is the possibility of a more critically analytical approach to the arguments constructed in the narratives. For example, page 229 quotes a woman who talks with satisfaction about the diversity of identities in her religious community. The problem is that this diversity is expressed in labelling language - all those making up the rainbow, as the narrator says, are named by their nationalities, although, especially in the context of a faith community, this should be completely insignificant. The paradox, then, is that the narrator, in speaking of mixed identities, uses categorizations that are essentially labelling and, in this sense, strongly differentiating. In addition, they belong to the typical stock of labelling. Moreover the narrator is one of the victims of such categorization (the author describes it earlier in subsection Self- Categorization and Labelling - p. 217) and it appears that she reproduces such categorizations.

A minor thing that I am unable to verify conclusively - it seems to me that the background constructions listed on pages 262 and 264 (especially the one on 262) are not real background constructions.

Reading the passages on identity and the tension between belonging to American society and culture on the one hand and identifying with being Japanese on the other, I thought that a very helpful concept to describe the essence of this experience would be the concept of marginal man by Everett Stonequist and Robert Park. Although it is a classical concept, growing out of the tradition of the Chicago School and interpretative sociology, it fits very well, in my opinion, with the phenomena described by the author. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Stonequist was analysing his own multicultural American society, chronologically, his analyses concern the times the author is writing about. He did not write about the Japanese, but about Jews and African-Americans, but with identical dilemmas. He did not write about the Japanese, but about Jews and African-Americans, but about identical dilemmas, including, among other things, the criteria of race in the experience of marginality, when one cannot pretend or, as Stonequist

wrote passed as being be someone else. In short, this concept would fit very well with the author's analyses.

Finally, I wanted to share one more reflection. The very interesting comparative analyses between the US and Canada in the context of the fate of the Japanese people studied and the differences in the processes of exclusion/ uprooting and reintegration led me to questions the shape of Canadian democracy. My knowledge of Canadian society is very colloquial, but the reflections presented by the author, combined, for example, with recently highlighted issue of the treatment of autochthonous children in Catholic schools supported by the government's Canadian Society Creation Project, give much food of thought. It is interesting that the country and society having very positive image often in contrast to American state, appears to build the concept of democracy in very strict and in fact ethnocentric manner....

Returning to the main thread of the review, which is the very positive assessment of the dissertation in the final conclusion, I state that the dissertation presented by Maria Wacławik, MA, constitutes an original and interesting research project. The dissertation, entitled *Memories of World War II and Ethnic Identity as Reflected in the Autobiographical Narrative Interviews of Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians*, meets the requirements for a doctoral dissertation specified in Article 13.1 of the Act on Academic Degrees and Academic Title (of 14 March 2003. Dz.U. Nr 65, poz.595, as amended, and on degrees and title in the field of art) and can be admitted to further stages, i.e. to public defense.